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->From the Editor's Keyboard  
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, it's that time of the year again. The weather has started to cool down, after a week of really nice weather. Okay, so it rained a little, but the temperatures have been really warm - an unofficial Indian Summer in my area. But, it's been windy. So, it's the end of October, so what does rain and wind, and cooler temperatures equate to? Plenty of leaves falling from the trees! One day my lawn had a sparse covering of leaves, and now it's blanketed with them! I guess I know what I'll be starting to do this weekend!

And, Halloween is approaching, and falls during this weekend. Being out in the suburbs, I really enjoy this holiday because there are a lot of kids that go out dressed in holiday attire. While I'm usually the one the past few years that watches the dogs so they don't "escape" outside while the trick-or-treaters come by, I do look out the window from time to time to get a glimpse of the scary goings-on in the neighborhood. It's a lot of fun! Just remember one important thing: drive safely because many of the kids out there going dorr-to-door might not be able to see you.

The other "scary" part during the Halloween "season" is that election day is two days later! And we thought that Halloween was full of scary monsters! This election is not going to be a fun time for politicians! The voters are truly fed up with a lot of what is going on in this country these days. And the economy has to be right up there near the top of the list of major issues. Incumbents are worried. Democrats are worried. The people are worried. Can't blame any of them for being concerned!

However, as a registered voter (you did register to vote, right?!), you/we have to power to enable change if we're not happy with those currently in office and seeking re-election. But to be able to help enable change, you have to vote! Make sure that you get out there next week (that's Tuesday!) and vote. Vote for who you want to be in office, or against those that you don't want to be in office - but vote! Your candidate may not win, or ballot questions or amendments (or whatever) may not pass, but at least you can say that you voted for who and what you supported. I think that this election has all of the markings for a wake-up call for politicians!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and we're only a matter of days from elections.

Yeah, you just knew I was going to talk about it, didn't you? Well, I won't disappoint you. [grin]

It's going to be an interesting election for a couple of reasons. First, this is the first election since the Democrats took control of both houses of Congress and the White House. The economic situation isn't any better than it was two years ago and is in fact worse in many respects; the effects of the policies of the previous eight years, if you want my opinion.

Regardless of why, people are up in arms about things. Liberals are up in arms because, although catastrophe in both the auto and finance industries was avoided, the economy is in pretty bad shape. Unemployment is still high. Everyone wants to talk about jobs; whether the government should try pumping more money into the economy in the form of stimuli, or whether they should slash taxes. There are, of course (at least) two sides to the argument.

Liberals want to use tax money to fund public projects and incentives. Conservatives say no, we should cut taxes more and keep the tax cuts that were put in place years ago.

Okay. They both sound good, right? Well, let's think about that for a bit.

First of all, since I have a definite liberal bias, let's take a look at the conservative idea. Cut taxes. Just cut 'em down. It's always easier to spend money that's not been taken away from you in the first place, right? And the administration costs... you cut those right out by not taking the money in the first place. You don't need office space or computers or phones or mail-in forms to give money back, because you never took it away from the public in the first place. Yeah, that's the ticket. Just don't take the money in the first place. Simple. People have more money, so they spend more money. The economy starts rolling without government intervention and everybody is happier. The government bailouts only caused more red tape and didn't create jobs. The stimulus that they tried just sent money to China, since that's where so many things are made these days.

Okay, now it's the liberals' turn. Cutting taxes and keeping the current tax cuts in place benefits the rich, because the existing tax cuts slashed their taxes. In addition, and this is something I don't hear politicians mentioning a lot and I've always wondered why, rich people don't spend any more simply because they HAVE more... that's kind of the definition of being rich... that you can afford to go out and buy whatever you want to. In other words, someone making half a million dollars a year can already buy just about anything they want. Having 5% of their tax bill lopped off isn't going to go out and buy a new Chevy. It might allow them to go out and buy a new BMW a few months earlier though.

Now, in a lot of reports, small businesses are included in the same group as wealthy individuals. And those statistics are often used to show that those self-same tax cuts benefit small businesses. If you take less money from a small business, they'll have more resources to hire new employees, right?

Well, the problem with that is sort of a 'Catch-22'. No matter how little a small business pays in taxes, they're not going to hire new people unless they need them. They don't need them unless they've got business coming in. They won't have business coming in unless the economy turns around.

So where do we start? I like the idea of the government actually doing something... Eisenhower spent a lot of our money developing our current infrastructure. Most of the interstate highways we take for granted today are there because Ike decided we needed it. Roosevelt did it before him, with a slew of government programs all aimed at not only getting people money to live on, but on the country getting something out of it too. We got all kinds of public works projects out of the deal... public roads and buildings, educational aid, schools, parks and bridges all over the country. So not only did we get something for our money, we got.. our money. People went to work, even if it wasn't a high-paying job. It was work. It was something to get through the tough times.

That makes a little more sense to me than cutting taxes in the hope that some rich guy buys an American luxury car instead of a foreign one.

Now, I've just shown you how easy it is to have two sides to every option. You would think that there would be enough "meat" to just about every subject that you could imagine for people to argue whichever side they want, right?

Well, evidently that's not the case. Look at the current election campaigns. You can't swing a dead cat without hitting a negative ad. Personally, I think negative ads should be outlawed. It should be illegal to refer to your opponent in any way in a campaign ad. And that goes for ANY political ad, not just those from candidates.

I've seen negative "attack" ads from both sides this election... we all have. Whether its Alaska, Delaware or Florida, California, Michigan or Connecticut, the negative ads are out there. Sure, I want to know if someone I might consider voting for has been convicted of a felony or if they screwed their business partner out of his life's savings, but that info should come from someone other than his/her opponent. Even my congressman, someone I like and respect, has taken to using negative ads. This kind of bothered me... until I remembered the ads his opponent put up first. Inaccuracies, half-truths and downright fabrications ran throughout the ads. I don't feel any better that the ads that my candidate ran were "less negative". Of course, I have to wonder if they really are less negative, or if they just seem so to me because he's the one I support.

We've seen negative ads in politics for a long, long time, but it seems that all we see this time around is negative ads. Poll after poll tells politicians that the public hates negative ads. There's nothing that turns people off more than a negative ad. So why do they use them? Simple. Because: Because they work. Studies have shown that the negative content of an ad tends to stay with us even though we detest the ads themselves. Unfortunately, politicians know that they work and how, and know just how to place them. Maybe we SHOULD just ban them altogether and see what



The price drop could help Sony get ahead of rival Nintendo this holiday season, which announced last month that its new Nintendo 3DS won't launch in Japan until Feb. 26 or in the U.S. until March.

### "Lights Out" Videogame Puts Players in Street Fighting Scene

Virtual fighters engaged in a bare-knuckle brawl as Sony introduced a world of street fighting played out with Move motion-sensing controls for PlayStation 3 videogame consoles.

Players bobbed, jabbed, punched and head-butted under the daunting gaze of action film tough guy Danny Trejo, whose animated character is a coach in "The Fight: Lights Out" title set for release on November 9.

"I love that this gets you up off the couch and into action," said Trejo, whose easy smile and friendly manner were in sharp contrast to the hard guy roles he has acted out on screen in films like freshly released "Machete."

"You just play for a short bit and you can really feel it," Trejo told AFP at the Sony event, held in a San Francisco bar.

Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) said last week that it has a hit on its hands with its new Move motion-sensing controllers.

Sony reported that it sold more than a million Move devices in North America and Latin America in the 30 days after releasing them on the market in September.

"Retail demand is incredibly strong and we're working hard to keep the product in stock," said SCEA chief executive Jack Tretton.

Two dozen videogames tailored to Move play are available, with titles, including shooters such as "Killzone" and "Resident Evil," as well as sports games like "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11."

An additional 15 Move games planned for release in the coming year range from sports and shooter titles to puzzle and "family-friendly" fare aimed at capitalizing on the appeal of motion-sensing controllers to casual players.

Move controllers, which are reminiscent of small black flashlights topped with brightly colored orbs, allow gamers to control PS3 play with swings, jabs and other natural movements instead of the toggle-and-button commands that have been trademarks of play on PS3 and rival Xbox 360 consoles by Microsoft.

At the Mighty nightclub in San Francisco late Wednesday, players used Move controllers to act out street brawler moves instantly copied by their in-game champions.

PlayStation Eye cameras mounted on flat-screen televisions tracked movements of players that battled in a multi-mode that pitted combatants at different consoles against each other in one-on-one matches.

On-screen graphics let players see how much of a beating they were

taking or giving, and dirty moves could be executed with proper combinations of buttons, triggers and wand waves.

A single player mode of the game launched a campaign in which a fighter battled increasingly dangerous animated adversaries, training in a virtual gym and unlocking new moves along the gritty journey.

"The Fight: Lights Out" will be priced at 39.99 dollars.

Move wands are sold for 49.99 dollars. A smaller "sub controller" wand for use navigating characters in shooter games is priced at 29.99 dollars.

Sony combines Move controllers with Eye cameras and a videogame in bundles sold for 99.99 dollars. Adding a PS3 console to that bundle raises the price to 399.99 dollars.

PlayStation Eye cameras, needed to track movements of controller wands, sell separately for 39.99 dollars.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

US Regulators Scold Google for Taking E-mails

The Federal Trade Commission is scolding Google Inc. without punishing the Internet search leader for collecting e-mails, passwords and other personal information transmitted over unsecured wireless networks.

In a two-page letter released Wednesday, the regulatory agency expressed its displeasure with Google for allowing potentially sensitive information to be scooped up for several years before management realized it. It took an inquiry from German regulators earlier this year for Google to realize it had been inadvertently pulling and storing information from wireless networks as its cars took photos of neighborhoods around the world for its "Street View" mapping service.

The activity outraged some privacy watchdogs who believed Google's activity may have violated laws against unauthorized wiretapping. It also triggered the attention of legal authorities in several of the more than 30 countries where Google's cars were snooping through Wi-Fi networks.

Although Google apologized for intruding, it has steadfastly insisted that it didn't break any laws because it got the data from Wi-Fi systems that should have been protected with passwords. That lack of security left the networks open to anyone passing by with the right equipment. Google's Street View cars no longer are equipped to detect Wi-Fi networks.

The FTC said it closed its investigation without any further action against Google because it's satisfied with a series of measures that the company announced last week in an effort to improve its internal privacy controls.

Consumer Watchdog, a group that has been among the most strident critics of Google's so-called "Wi-Spy" incident, called FTC's resolution "premature and wrong." It also suggested that Google's lobbyists may have swayed the outcome of the inquiry. The company has spent \$3.9 million on lobbying activities so far this year and has met with the FTC on variety of topics, according to company disclosures.

"At a minimum, the public deserved a full report about Google's abuses from the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection," said John Simpson, who oversees a Consumer Watchdog project monitoring Google.

In a statement, Google said it welcomed the FTC's findings.

The company's collection of Wi-Fi information remains under investigation in the U.S. by a coalition of state attorneys general. Italy on Wednesday became the latest of several countries outside the U.S. to open investigations into whether Google's surveillance of Wi-Fi systems broke their laws.

Google says it gathered about 600 gigabytes of data - enough to fill about six floors of an academic library - and wants to delete all the information as soon it's cleared in all the affected countries. So far, it has only purged the information it picked up in Ireland, Denmark, Austria and Hong Kong.

#### Google Tightening Privacy Leash on Its Employees

Google Inc. is tightening its privacy leash on employees in an effort to ensure they don't intrude on people while the Internet search leader collects and stores information about its users.

Besides promoting longtime employee Alma Whitten to be its director of privacy, Google said Friday that it will require all 23,000 of its employees to undergo privacy training. The company also is introducing more checks aimed at making sure workers are obeying the rules.

Google's tougher privacy measures appear to be a response to recent breaches that have raised questions about the company's internal controls and policies.

In the most glaring example that indicated the company didn't have a good grasp on what its workers were doing, Google acknowledged in May that one of its engineers had created a program that vacuumed up potentially sensitive personal information, including e-mails and passwords, from unsecured wireless networks while Google cars cruised neighborhoods around the world. The vehicles were dispatched primarily to take photos for Google's online mapping service, but they also carried equipment to log the location of Wi-Fi networks.

The incident, which some critics have derisively labeled as "Wi-Spy," was caused by "an engineer's careless error as well as a lack of controls to ensure that necessary procedures to protect privacy were followed," Canada Privacy Commissioner Jennifer Stoddart concluded in a report this week.

Several other countries have skewered Google for scooping up 600 gigabytes



of data - equivalent to about six floors of an academic library - from Wi-Fi systems for more than two years before detecting a problem five months ago in response from to an inquiry from regulators in Germany.

Google initially said it had only captured fragments of people's online activities, but Canada's investigation determined that entire e-mails, passwords and website addresses had been obtained and stored. In confirming Canada's findings Friday, Google said it wants to delete all the Wi-Fi data remaining on its computers as quickly as possible, but must hold on to most of the information while authorities in different countries conduct their own investigations.

So far, Google has purged the Wi-Fi data it got in Ireland, Austria, Denmark and Hong Kong after gaining clearance from regulators in those countries. It still has the data from more than 20 other countries, including the United States, where a coalition of state attorneys generals has been looking into the breach.

While some countries have asserted Google's Wi-Fi snooping was illegal, the company has maintained it didn't break any laws even as management apologized for its bad behavior.

"We are mortified by what happened, but confident that these changes to our processes and structure will significantly improve our internal privacy and security practices for the benefit of all our users," Alan Eustace, Google's head of engineering, wrote in a Friday blog post.

Google's privacy safeguards appeared to be suspect once again after the Gawker blog reported that an engineer in its Kirkland, Wash. office had been using the privileges of his job to spy on the online accounts of four minors. Prompted by that report, Google last month acknowledged that it had fired the engineer for violating its privacy policies.

Maintaining the public's trust is critical to Google because the success of its search engine and part of its long-term business plans hinge in part on its ability to build databases about its users' preferences. Among other things, Google believes the information helps it deliver better search results than its rivals and sell more of the ads that generate virtually all the company's revenue.

Google, based in Mountain View, Calif., hopes to become an even bigger part of people's online lives by introducing more social networking features on its website so it can better compete with Facebook in the increasingly lucrative field of connecting friends and family members online. When Google introduced a social networking option into its free e-mail service in February, many users protested because the feature exposed their contact lists without prior permission.

#### Apple Joins Google in Counterattack Against Paul Allen Lawsuit

Apple last week joined forces with Google, Facebook, Yahoo and others in an effort to dismiss patent infringement charges brought by billionaire Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen.

In a federal lawsuit filed last August, an Allen-owned firm claimed that 11 companies, including Apple, Google, YouTube, Facebook, AOL and Yahoo, infringed four patents awarded more than a decade ago.

Among the patents was one that described a "news browser," while another referred to technology for alerting users of Web content related to what they were currently viewing.

Apple was one of four companies - the others were AOL, Google and Yahoo - charged with violating all four patents.

The patents were issued between 2000 and 2004 to Internal Research, an Allen-funded Silicon Valley research lab that shut its doors in 2000. The patents were later transferred to Interval Licensing, which Allen also controls.

Google launched the counterattack against Allen on Oct. 18 when it filed a motion to dismiss the claims. The motion asserted that Interval had failed to show how Google had infringed the patents, and that it had not named the technologies used by or the services offered by Google that allegedly violated those patents.

"Interval is not entitled to waste Court and party resources with a scattershot Complaint against multiple Defendants that fails to give any indication as to which products or services Interval contends are infringing and the factual basis for such a claim," Google asserted.

"Interval's Complaint is so devoid of any facts to support its infringement contentions that it is impossible for Google to reasonably prepare a defense," Google continued.

In an Oct. 19 follow-up motion submitted to Seattle-based U.S. District Court Judge Marsha Pechman, Google said Interval had tossed all 11 defendants into the same litigation basket without showing "any coordinated action" among the bunch.

The TechFlash blog first reported on Google's motion to dismiss in a story published Sunday.

Apple joined Google's motion on Oct. 21 with a filing of its own.

"Interval has sued eleven major corporations and made the same bald assertions that each defendant infringes 197 claims in four patents," Apple stated. "As the U.S. Supreme Court noted in *Twombly*, it is in this type of situation in which courts should use their 'power to insist upon some specificity in pleading before allowing a potentially massive factual controversy to proceed.'"

The other defendants have submitted their own similar motions to Judge Pechman.

Allen's suit seeks unspecified damages, as well as injunctions that would block the accused companies from continuing to use the patented technologies.

#### Regulator Taking on Cyberbullying in Schools

Schools receiving subsidies for Internet service will have to teach students about cyberbullying and the responsible use of social networking sites, the U.S. telecommunications regulator said on Friday.

Cyberbullying happens when teens use the Internet, mobile phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person, and it is a problem for nearly half of all U.S. teens, according to the National Crime Prevention Council.

It is increasingly being cited as a predecessor to suicide attempts, the third leading cause of death among 10- to 24-year-olds in the United States.

Last month, 18-year-old Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi took his life after fellow students posted video of him engaged in sexual activity online. In 2006, 13-year-old Megan Meier committed suicide after a classmate and friend's mother bullied her through a fake MySpace account.

"It is growing by the day as kids younger and younger are using interactive technology," Parry Aftab, an Internet privacy and security lawyer, said of cyberbullying.

"They're now carrying around more power in their backpacks, pockets and purses than most corporations had 10 years ago," said Aftab, who is also the founder and executive director of Wired Safety, which runs the stopcyberbullying.org website.

The Federal Communications Commission said it will issue an order to schools receiving funds from the E-rate program, which subsidizes school Internet access, to address cyberbullying and improper use of sites like Facebook and MySpace.

The FCC said the order would put its regulations in line with the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

The agency voted in September to ease rules mandating how schools and libraries can use \$2.25 billion in federal subsidies to get Internet access, allowing them to take advantage of unused fiber optic cables in localities and high-speed access from state and local networks.

E-rate funded schools, which the FCC said represent the "vast majority of schools," must have Internet safety policies and filters to prevent access to inappropriate content. The new order will ensure that these policies also include online safety education, FCC said.

Aftab said her organization will release its Stop Cyberbullying Toolkit for Schools on November 22. The toolkit will offer \$850,000 worth of resources and materials for free downloads by schools to create programs to curb cyberbullying.

The FCC also announced plans to open the application process for a pilot program that would fund wireless Internet access and mobile learning devices, which could become increasingly important as students use new devices like tablet PCs and smartphones to get access to their schoolwork.

The agency said schools and libraries can apply for the program in the coming days, with applications due by mid-December.

To further its education agenda, the FCC will also host a forum on kids' use of mobile technology on December 1.

## Facebook Sues Faceporn, Cites Copyright Infringement

Facebook has filed another lawsuit, this time against Faceporn.com, an x-rated social-networking site. Facebook filed suit on Oct. 15 in the U.S. District Court in Northern California, claiming that Faceporn copied Facebook to build its site and is in violation of copyright.

Faceporn calls itself "the number one socializing porn and sex network," but its site has been down since Wednesday according a Tweet.

"Forced to close down for a while, due to unforeseen circumstances. We'll be back though. Better than ever," said the @faceporn handle.

Faceporn does not specify when it will be back online. A note on the site said it is "down until further notice."

It's not the first time Facebook has prevented a social networking site from using a related name. Facebook sued Teachbook in August, saying that the site's use of the word "book" was in violation of its Trademark. Facebook considers uses of the words "book" and "face" its property. Facebook said Faceporn's concept is too similar as well.

Facebook said that Faceporn " blatantly copied the Facebook logo, site, and Wall trademark," said court documents. In screen shots included with the court filings, Faceporn does have elements that are similar to Facebook such as a Wall and a blue and white design. Although users can't poke one another, they can "send a flirt."

Facebook has requested that Faceporn creator Thomas Pederson surrender the domain name and all revenue from it to Facebook.

Faceporn has not commented on the issue. Both parties are expected to meet in court in January.

## Windows 8 Coming in 2012?

Just as you were getting comfortable with Windows 7, it looks like Windows 8 is coming in the next two years. In a post celebrating the one-year anniversary of Windows 7 - the fastest selling OS in history - Microsoft's Dutch Web site briefly mentioned the construction and release of its successor:

"Microsoft is on course for the next version of Windows. But it will take about two years before 'Windows 8' on the market." Winrumors.com grabbed and translated the post, and CNET took a screenshot of the text, which unsurprisingly disappeared shortly after the news stole headlines. Now Microsoft is back to being tight-lipped about Windows 8 and its expected release.

Reports from last year suggested Microsoft was building a 128-bit version of its OS, which could very likely be Windows 8. More recently, NetworkWorld acquired more than 15 confidential slide decks detailing possible additions, including body-sensing features similar to the Xbox Kinect, a desktop app store like Apple's forthcoming Mac App Store, near-instant CPU booting, and a focus on powering tablets.

But most importantly, by the time Windows 8 supposedly drops, Microsoft is going to have Apple's latest OS to contend with. Apple just gave a sneak peek of Mac OS X Lion - called a marriage of OS X and Apple's mobile iOS - that includes some drool-inducing features like a desktop app store, advanced multitouch gestures, and more.

If Microsoft acts wisely, it stands a chance to emulate - and perhaps one-up - all of OS X Lion's key features ... or it could rush and produce another Vista.

#### Microsoft Releases Office 11 for Mac with Outlook

On Tuesday, Microsoft released Office 11 for the Mac. The newest version of the most popular productivity suite includes a Mac version of Outlook, online collaboration, the reappearance of Visual Basic for creating macros, and other new features.

Built from the ground up, Office 2011 includes the standard-bearers Word, Excel, PowerPoint and, for the first time, Outlook. It is designed to work with an on-site Exchange server and with Microsoft's newly announced cloud service for Office, Office 365.

It has been slightly more than a quarter century since Microsoft first released Mac versions of Word and Excel, and there has been a dedicated team since 1997. This is the first major revision of the Mac Office suite since early 2008.

Eric Wilfrid, general manager of Microsoft's Office for Mac team, said about 75 percent of all Mac users have Office installed. "Mac users," he said, "need Office because it helps them work with the Windows world." Wilfrid added that the new release brings cloud-based benefits to Mac users that Windows customers saw when Office 2010 for Windows was released.

Office Web Apps, for instance, allows a user to edit documents right in the browser. Coauthoring tools enable simultaneous editing with others of a Word document or a PowerPoint presentation, whether the other collaborators are on Mac or Windows machines.

Microsoft Mac Senior Evangelist Kurt Schmucker said users of Office 2011 will "notice right away" the increased launch speed of each app, as well as performance improvements in specific features, such as charting. He said one tester described the new Word and Excel as "light because they are so much faster."

Viewing options to increase ease of use have been implemented throughout Office 2011. Full screen in Word, for example, offers two views -- one designed for writing and one for reading. When in the full-screen view for writing, the user interface disappears and a formatting toolbar appears when the mouse is moved to the top of the screen. A Dynamic Reorder feature allows layers in a document or a presentation to be moved around. In Outlook, there's a view to enable easier management of multiple e-mail accounts.

The new release is offered in three editions - Home & Student, Home & Business, and Academic. Outlook is part of Home & Business, while Home &

Student has Word, Excel and PowerPoint, plus licenses for up to three computers. The discounted Academic version has all four programs.

Pricing ranges from \$99 for a single license of the Academic version to a two-install pack of Home & Business for \$279.

In general, upgrades will not be allowed, just as they are not for Windows Office 2011. However, purchasers of the current Office 2008 can get a free upgrade to 2011, an offer which began in August and will continue to Nov. 30.

### MySpace Launching New Version of Website

MySpace launched a new version of its website centered around music and entertainment, as the social networking company attempts to regain its former appeal in a market it helped create.

MySpace Chief Executive Mike Jones said that News Corp-owned MySpace is no longer seeking to compete head-on with social networking company Facebook, and is recasting itself as a complimentary service that he hopes the 35-year-old-and-under crowd will flock to stay abreast of the hottest music and videos.

With traffic to MySpace declining and the company rocked by succession of management changes and layoffs during the past two years, the re-launch of the website represents a critical step in efforts to rejuvenate an asset once considered central to News Corp's online business.

"Most investors have written off MySpace now," said Richard Greenfield, an analyst at BTIG said on Tuesday. Whether MySpace can rebuild its buzz in the highly competitive and fast-changing Web market is an open question, he said.

News Corp bought MySpace in 2005 for \$580 million, at a time when the social networking service was at the height of its popularity.

But MySpace, which says it has between 125 million and 130 million active monthly users, has been eclipsed by Facebook, which has more than 500 million users. News Corp does not disclose financial information about MySpace.

There have been media reports that News Corp is interested in selling MySpace, though executives at News Corp have repeatedly maintained that that is not the case.

MySpace's new incarnation leans heavily on the company's strong heritage in music - the company already has partnerships with the four major record labels - and seeks to supplement it with content about movies, television and video games. Visitors to the site can subscribe to news feeds about favorite bands and actors, as well as follow other MySpace users that the service recommends as authorities about particular types of music or other topics.

MySpace also has changed the look of its site: Users will still be able to customize their personal pages, but to a lesser extent. Personal pages will have a consistent placement of on-screen navigation buttons, for example. Critics said the old site was difficult to navigate because of

the inconsistent appearance of the members' pages. CEO Jones told Reuters on Monday this has hurt "user engagement."

A beta, or test version of the new site will be available to some users on Wednesday, with the site due to be available to all users by the end of November.

MySpace began the redesign of the site eight months ago, at a time when Jones and Jason Hirschhorn had taken over as co-Presidents, following the departure of Chief Executive Owen Van Natta. In June, Hirschhorn left the company to "pursue other opportunities," according to a MySpace spokesperson.

A 2006 search advertising deal with Google Inc that guarantees MySpace \$300 million a year in revenue expired in August, and was extended for one month, according to a person familiar with the talks. A MySpace spokesperson said on Tuesday that the company had no update to provide on the deal.

While social networking services like Twitter and Facebook are growing bigger every month, MySpace has seen its number of worldwide unique visitors decline every month since March, according to web analytics firm comScore.

MySpace said it expects the new version of the site to boost the total number of users that visit the site and the time they spend on the site.

Jones said that he believed the majority, or "close to the majority" of MySpace's current audience belongs to the so-called Generation Y, the 35-year-old and under demographic that MySpace will focus on. But it's unclear how many of MySpace's older users will stick around after the site changes.

Jones acknowledged that there could be some "noise in our usage patterns" after the switch, as users adjusted to the new site, though he was unsure whether the company might see a near-term increase or decrease in its audience size or usage.

Wedbush Securities analyst Lou Kerner, speaking generally about MySpace's previously discussed plan to recast the company around music and entertainment, said that focusing on a narrow segment of the market could allow the company to find a new life in shadow of Facebook.

"There are other social networking companies that are still doing well, that have found niches. The most obvious is LinkedIn, which continues to grow rapidly," Kerner said, referring to the social network devoted to online professionals.

#### New IE9 Test Build Links PC and Web-Site Features

Microsoft has released a new preview of Internet Explorer 9 featuring performance improvements and increased standards support. The latest IE9 test build will give web-site designers and software developers an opportunity to play with new capabilities such as CSS3 2-D features that let site visitors rotate photos, graphics and text segments.

Smart devices of all types have become "powerful platforms that present

new opportunities to do exciting applications with user interfaces that are more approachable than ever before," said Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer. At the heart of Microsoft's next-generation browser is HTML5 technology that will provide the next "wave of innovation between the back end and the front end," he added.

"It's the lingua franca for talking to all of these smart devices across the planet," Ballmer said during his keynote address at the company's Professional Developers Conference on Thursday.

The empowerment that HTML5 gives web designers and app developers is the major reason why the previous IE9 test build that Microsoft launched last month has become the fastest-adopted IE beta release in Microsoft's history, said Microsoft Vice President Dean Hachamovitch.

"In the six weeks since we released Internet Explorer 9, we've seen 10 million downloads, and that means a lot of enthusiasm from developers," Hachamovitch explained to PDC 10 attendees. "And that popularity reflects the significant improvements in browsing that IE9 brings to the web."

Despite all the fanfare around smartphones and web tablets, Ballmer noted that the PC remains the number-one smart device on the planet, and Microsoft has sold more than 240 million Windows 7 licenses in the past 12 months - equivalent to 88 percent of the entire PC market. For this reason, he said, web designers and app developers need to ensure that they are taking advantage of all of Windows 7's new capabilities, from touchscreen support to "ink" - the ability to use a stylus, mouse or a finger to write or draw directly on the PC screen.

"With the work on Internet Explorer, we are trying to make that a whole lot simpler for you" by keeping the focus on "doing HTML5 really well," Ballmer said. "We also asked ourselves, how can we improve on the user experience for HTML5 applications, based on the fact that IE9 runs on Windows."

The goal is to "unlock the full power of the web and the full power of the PC in one seamless exercise" by making "the web feel more like native applications," Ballmer observed. "We've also worked hard on interoperability," so that web-site developers can concentrate more on innovation "and less on just rewriting sites."

More than 70 Microsoft partners who handle more than two-thirds of active web traffic are already building on the capabilities in Internet Explorer 9 and HTML5, including Twitter, Facebook and Amazon. Their web designers have been able to take advantage of the fact that IE9 beta enables users to pin sites directly to the Windows taskbar.

This means web designers can start to program jumplists as well as offer notifications - just as Windows applications do, Hachamovitch observed. "Your web site participates with Windows applications on the desktop," he said. "They are more available and interactive than regular sites in old browsers."

Geocities Archive To Be Released Via BitTorrent

It was about a year ago that Yahoo!-hosted Geocities sites started going



offline. For the majority of Internet users, this event was met with little fanfare; Geocities had long gone out of fashion as a free web host and been replaced by sites like Myspace, Facebook, WordPress, and more recently, Tumblr.

Yahoo! had given little notice that it would be shutting down Geocities hosting, which made the prospect of creating an archive difficult. Web historians and archivists at Textfiles.com believed the potential loss to be considerable and mounted a concerted effort to make a complete backup of all public Geocities sites. To quote Textfiles:

"What we were facing, you see, was the wholesale destruction of the still-rare combination of words digital heritage, the erasing and silencing of hundreds of thousands of voices, voices that representing the dawn of what one might call 'regular people' joining the World Wide Web. A unique moment in human history, preserved for many years and spontaneously combusting due to a few marks in a ledger, the decision of who-knows for who-knows-what."

By using a bit of creative hacking used to forge a 'user agent' - the bit of data that tells a server the method (e.g. Web browser, search engine bot, RSS reader) by which pages are accessed - textfiles.com volunteers made it appear if Geocities was being indexed by Google. Rather than simply indexing, the volunteers were scraping and storing all the data available on the Geocities servers to create a single, massive archive.

With the backup effort underway, the question remained: What should be done with data? The first task was to create a single archive, which would then be compressed and released to the web via BitTorrent! Yes, that means you too can own a (rather large) piece of Web history, if you've got the storage space to spare. Compress, the entire archive will likely clock in at over 900-gigabytes. The archive is currently being compressed; the BitTorrent release should be available within a few days. Check out [ascii.textfiles.com](http://ascii.textfiles.com) for details about the release!

### Google Bug Maroons Users

Travellers are furious they can't access their Google Docs due to a major bug in Google's systems.

Google has acknowledged that the bug is their #1 top priority to fix at present, though it has been listed in the Google Docs known issues page for almost a week.

The problem occurs if a user has both a personal Google account (such as Gmail) and a company Google Apps account, for their documents and work email. Google recently introduced a feature to enable easier switching between accounts, and if it detects a user has multiple accounts, gives them a screen at login time allowing them to "Select an account to use with Google Docs".

However, Google Apps customers have been finding that after logging in to their account, they either can't access their account at all, or they can't open any documents in their Google Docs library.

The error presents itself as "This webpage has a redirect loop" in Chrome, "Too many redirects occurred trying to open <http://xyz>. This might occur

if you open a page that is redirected to open another page which then is redirected to open the original page," in Safari and "Too many redirects" in Firefox.

The problem is particularly inconvenient for Google's primary target audience for its Google Apps service - businesspeople who want to work from multiple locations and collaborate with their colleagues.

Storing documents online can be a godsend for travellers - until the online service stops working. Google's key competitor, Microsoft, says it has designed its Microsoft Office 365 online service so that all documents that a user works on are also stored locally on their computer, and although Microsoft has been actively developing its own internet services strategy, Microsoft chief Steve Ballmer hasn't held back in his criticism of Google Docs, being quoted in articles like "Google Apps blow, no one actually uses them".

Google, meanwhile, is contrite about the problem, but has not been able to fix it in the past week. "It has been marked as the highest priority bug and we're actively working on it. We'll get it out as soon as it is fixed. Again, we really apologize for the inconvenience," said a Google employee, writing in the company's "Known issues" page.

A workaround recommended by Google is to sign out of all Google accounts, clearing the browser cache and cookies, and then only using one Google account per browser. Simply clearing cache and cookies is not enough - users must also sign out of their accounts.

Critics of internet-based applications have long warned that trusting a large company with your data could result in unforeseen consequences. One user posting on the Google Known Issues page commented, "I concur with comments made above about the lesson Google has given all of us on Cloud computing." Another user commented, "PLEASE - this is unacceptable for a business product. Back to Word...sigh"

Google Australia said users should follow the workaround described in the known problems page and only use one login per browser. Although many users report they cannot access their documents, even after following Google's workaround, Google Australia's Courtney Hohne said the bug was "not an outage" and would therefore not qualify under Google Apps Premier's 99.9% service level uptime agreement.

However, this provides no comfort to travellers stuck overseas who have not seen the "known issues" page, and are not aware of Google's proposed workaround.

Kelly Innis, Product Manager for Online Services, Microsoft Australia, said Microsoft's upcoming online Office 365 suite was designed to provide users with significant protection against online service downtime.

"We feel that a key differentiator for Microsoft is that our SLAs are financially backed on a 99.9% uptime, amortised across the month. So, if Microsoft is down for more than 45 minutes in any one month, that means we haven't met our SLAs, and the whole month's fee is given back to our customers."

"Also, if the user has Office 2010 on their PC, then all of the documents they work on in Office 365 are also cached locally, which means if the web service does go down, their most recently used documents are cached on their PC and are accessible and safe."

## PayPal Suffers Widespread Outage

PayPal is experiencing an outage that is affecting most of its members, preventing them from using the online payment service to conduct transactions.

The problem began at around 11 a.m. U.S. Eastern Time and is ongoing, according to a company blog post.

"Almost all our members are having difficulty logging into their accounts and sending or receiving money from PayPal," the post reads.

PayPal didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

There are more than 87 million active PayPal accounts in 190 markets and 24 currencies worldwide.

A massive system outage at PayPal is the last thing parent company eBay needs. In the third quarter, PayPal, increasingly important to eBay's financial health, grew its revenue 22 percent to US\$838 million year-on-year, while the eBay online marketplace registered revenue growth of only 3 percent.

Revenue for all of eBay inched up 1 percent, eBay said last week. PayPal accounted for 37 percent of eBay's overall revenue, up from 31 percent in 2009's third quarter.

## Fake Defragmenter Holds PCs for Ransom

Rogue antivirus products have been afflicting unsuspecting users for years now. Some actively plant malware while pretending to remove it. Others run a quick fake scan on the system and report dozens of spurious threats, threats that can only be removed if you pay the product's significant registration fee. But the latest, a nasty fake defragmenter discovered by researchers at CyberDefender Research Labs, is even worse.

The rogue software gets onto your system through a malicious web site introduced into search results using a technique called SEO (Search Engine Optimization) poisoning. In this particular case the researchers encountered the problem site searching on the phrase "Election Day Printable Worksheets". If your system isn't protected, just clicking the poisoned link is enough to get the malicious software installed.

According to CyberDefender's research team, "System Defragmenter pretends to be an optimization program that will scan the hard drive to fix any memory problems and hard disk errors the machine may have." After it runs, trying to launch any program or shortcut on the desktop will just trigger the error message "Scan Hard Drive". The hard drive scan finishes with a warning that the drive has errors that can only be fixed if the user purchases the full program. And, according to CyberDefender, the payment page isn't actually secure but includes a fake "verified" green address bar.

I assume that once you pay off this protection racket the fake software fixes the fake problems it created. Even then, all is not well, as the bad guys now have your credit card details.

Once the ransom-ware gets on your system you probably can't run an antivirus scan, though a Rescue CD might save the day. Truly, your best protection is to install a high-quality antivirus or security suite and keep it totally up to date. You really, really don't want to encounter this pernicious ransom-ware.

#### UK Police Learn How To Follow Crooks - on Twitter

Trailing suspects is a staple of police work. Aspiring British detectives will soon be learning how to do it online.

Updated training for Britain's annual crop of 3,500 trainee detectives will include pointers on how to track criminals on micro-blogging site Twitter and mine Facebook pages for witnesses, a spokesman for the National Policing Improvement Agency said Friday.

"It's a way of tracking down criminals," the spokesman said. "Finding the sort of people they've contacted and the sort of groups they're a member of."

He spoke on condition of anonymity in line with official policy.

Facebook and Twitter are both enormously popular in Britain and online indiscretions regularly feature in accounts of how police and prosecutors secure convictions.

The new training, which will be available starting in January of next year, will also include information on how to gather clues from computers, cell phones and other electronic devices.

#### Virus Breach: How to Recover

A PCMag reader contacted me with a fairly serious problem. He found a gibberish-named item launched at startup from a gibberish folder that, according to Windows Explorer, held zero bytes. If he unchecked the file to keep it from launching at startup, it mysteriously re-checked itself. Clearly he had acquired some sort of polymorphic malware. I asked what sort of security protection was present.

The reader had McAfee AntiVirus Plus 2011 installed, but the malware breached its protection. That's not as uncommon as you might think. I recently ran into a threat called Tidserv that managed to install despite protection by Norton AntiVirus 2011. The victim of this latest attack felt his only recourse might be restoring the system back to its out-of-box state. That sort of full system restore can wipe out months or years of data and program installations; it's not to be undertaken lightly.

In this particular case I suggested the reader turn first to McAfee's Stinger, a focused tool specifically designed to remove tough threats. For a Norton user I would have started with Norton Power Eraser. Trend

Micro's HouseCall is another possibility. All of these tools are freely available for download.

When tech support agents for some security vendors run into a problem their own product can't handle, they sometimes turn to Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware 1.46 for help with cleanup. If the real problem is that the malware fights back against removal, try a free Rescue CD that boots into a non-Windows operating system and thereby prevents the malware from running. There are many, many tools to try before you resort to wiping your PC back to its out-of-box state.

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